

# Meeting Notes



## Downtown Action Team

May 26, 2005

8:00 a.m.

Tier One Center

1221 N Street

<b>Members</b>	Jon Camp Lynnie Green Matt Harris Deb Johnson Jessica Kennedy Dan Massoth (absent) Lori McClurg Annette McRoy	Sachit Nadkarni (absent) Will Scott Kent Seacrest (absent) Nader Sepahpur (absent) Mike Sisk (absent) Clay Smith (absent) Jason Smith	Cecil Steward Jane Stricker Ed Swotek Becky Van de Bogart Michelle Waite Jon Weinberg Terry Werner (absent)
<b>Others Present</b>	Don Arambula Brenda Bergman David Cary Carol Connor George Crandall Tad Fraizer Karl Fredrickson Ann Harrell	Lynn Johnson Marvin Krout Dallas McGee Polly McMullen Mike Merwick Benjamin Morgan Kent Morgan Brian Praeuner	Mayor Seng Josh Swartzlander Mike Tavlin ( <i>on behalf of DAT member Clay Smith</i> ) Myrna Tewes Chuck Zimmerman Michele Abendroth

Co-Chair Cecil Steward called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. He welcomed George Crandall and Don Arambula of Crandall Arambula. Those present introduced themselves.

Crandall began with a PowerPoint presentation which touched on some of the highlights of the plan. He reviewed a schedule of the scope of work. The next DAT meeting is scheduled for June 9 with the final community workshop on June 8.

He noted that they are producing three products which are called for in the work program. They include the Master Plan, the Implementation Program and Design Guidelines.

Early on, they developed the Capacity Diagram, which has been revised over the course of meetings. Economics Research Associates has projected the demand for additional office and retail space. P Street has been identified as the primary retail corridor. It is important that the parking is not removed from the retail by any distance. They have provided potential locations for approximately 2,200 parking spaces. They are proposing that there be a retail standard of edge-to-edge store fronts.

They would like to link 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets with the Haymarket and P Street. The key is to find a plan which would get pedestrians across safely. As a long-term strategy, they are suggesting to

depress the four center lanes of the roadway underneath P Street, keeping the lanes along the edges as they are today.

Crandall noted that another big piece of the plan is to have a downtown “living room” or public square on 13<sup>th</sup> and P Streets which would be the center of activity. Retail would edge the square, which is very important as we need active edges for this to work. There is 100 feet of right-of-way, and they are proposing to use 60 feet for two lanes of traffic in both directions and the other 40 feet would be returned to the pedestrian. The idea is to link the University and O Street so the square has a much greater presence. They are suggesting an office building on the west side which would have retail on the ground floor. At the Starship Theater site, they are proposing a new parking structure with retail on the ground floor. There is also the potential for housing or hotel space on top of the parking structure.

With respect to implementation of the plan, they have identified priority catalyst projects. Project A is the public square, B is the parking, and C is the new office building. These are the most important projects for the community to accomplish because it would change the overall perception of the downtown and indicate a commitment to the heart of the community. Project D, which is the P Street retail corridor, also is important. Projects E, F and G are parking structures. The Arbor Day Foundation is planning some improvements to their site, and this an exciting first step and a commitment to retail. Of course, the Grand Theater is across the street at the other end. With all these pieces in place, we would be off to a great start. It is not possible to do everything at once, but it is important to pick projects that would change the dynamics of the downtown.

Other catalyst projects have to do with the public realm. Many times, 40% of the land area is in the public realm in streets and sidewalks. Unless the streets are pedestrian friendly, the downtown is not a place where people want to invest and be. These projects are public projects which would take place over a period of time.

Projects A through G and the other catalyst projects amount to \$92 million. For every \$1 of public money, \$4-6 private dollars should follow. Total private investment would be \$1.3 billion. This would be a ratio of 1:15; the break even is 1:4. If we do nothing, we will not get this private investment. They have identified other funding sources as part of the Master Plan.

The Master Plan will include a 120 day schedule because it is important to gain momentum and see results. The first item is to adopt the Master Plan and Design Guidelines. It is important that the projects are achievable so that we create success and momentum.

Implementing design guidelines is very important. There should also be a design review process. The guidelines are very simple and straightforward. Showing photographs of what is appropriate and inappropriate is important as well. The success of a building has to do with the first floor and the pedestrian experience. Retail corners, residential doors, fenestration, rooftops, green architecture, parking structures, lighting and signage are all details to consider. A checklist of guidelines is important to make it as simple as possible.

Steward asked Mayor Seng if she had any comments. Mayor stated that she is here today to

listen and learn. She believes it is important to get started quickly. She will be briefed in detail this afternoon.

Scott asked about the timeline on the design guidelines. Crandall stated that there will be a draft within a week. This group then needs to set up a mechanism for review, so people are comfortable with the process. It should be ready for adoption by the City Council within a couple months. Staff will be involved in the review as they would prepare it for an urban design commission. Arambula added that minor projects could be handled by staff, but major projects should be reviewed by a larger group that represents a number of different viewpoints. Crandall noted that having design guidelines take care of many problems beforehand because architects design buildings with the design guidelines in mind. Investors like the guidelines because it ensures that the neighbors will play by the same rules.

Steward commented that the difference between prescriptive and performance based guidelines is huge.

Arambula stated that it is also important to have a plan to support the guidelines. Certain elements of the plan need to be adopted as part of the zoning code.

Steward asked the committee members to give their input on the draft plan.

Stricker stated that the biking path is important. She is excited about the retail. She likes the square concept.

Waite stated that she likes the square concept and the concept for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets.

VandeBogart stated that she likes the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Street concept.

Swotek commented that we need to have a vision, and he has seen some creative ideas today to provide synergy. The challenge is to continue the visionary leadership and to convince the community that this is of dire importance for the community.

Jason Smith stated that it is important to clarify what the expectations are. We also have to be careful not to create additional costs.

Green stated that they have done a great job in setting the framework. She questioned what Lincoln is going to do to attract developers to get the \$1.3 billion in private investments. Crandall stated that we need to have strategic public investment to sustain private investment. Arambula stated that we need to create momentum. Tax increment financing is a great funding tool to use, but you must use it in a limited way.

Tavlin thanked the consultants for their great work. He stated that he is hopeful that the leadership will lead to vision which will lead to a greater outcome for the community.

McMullen stated that she is especially excited about the P Street strategy because there is a unique window of opportunity to kick off the retail strategy. The challenge for the parking

structure fund is the site. The vision for 13<sup>th</sup> and P helps to identify a site. There is a need for more housing, but we have to be sure we cover all income levels. She added that even though the Master Plan has not yet been finalized, the preliminary concepts presented thus far have stimulated private interest.

Weinberg stated that they have talked about making the streets more pedestrian friendly, and he is hoping there is a timeline for implementing the streetscape.

Krout congratulated the consultants on where we are, as the ideas are more refined every time they come back. The really successful cities are the ones that have strong, thriving, active downtowns. He hopes some champions for this Plan are borne out of this committee. His final comment is that the Planning Commission will consider an amendment to the downtown theater policy, which states that theaters are limited to six screens outside the downtown. The Planning Department is recommending denial because it is important to protect what we have downtown.

Crandall added that the downtown theaters must be strong because they have the potential to be a major attractor to the downtown. Movie-goers will also use the retail, restaurants and hotels. If there is a multi-plex on the edge, it will detract from downtown. Especially since the Grand is so new and is building momentum, there is no question that this would be a detractor.

McClurg complimented the consultants on their creative presentation. She believes that the vision and leadership is the most important part of the process. She provided examples in Antelope Valley, Haymarket Park and South 27<sup>th</sup> Street.

Kennedy applauded the consultants on their vision. She feels that leadership is key. The vision that we have is going to resonate into a larger percentage of the population.

Camp stated there are two things he would like to focus on. One is the concentration in downtown. He likes that there are some parameters there. Secondly, he questioned how the public/private investment for downtown exists with Antelope Valley. Crandall stated that it is a question of timing and priorities. Antelope Valley will happen and should happen over a period of time. The top priority has to be the center, because it is in the long-term economic interest to do so. Anything other than that will delay progress in the downtown. Downtown has to lead and then the edges will follow. Arambula stated that he appreciated the comment on having a focus. It is important to have an incremental approach, because it is more financially achievable. Crandall added that it is a matter of prioritizing projects in making both Antelope Valley and downtown work. Camp noted that it is important not to confuse the community.

Johnson thanked the consultants, City staff and DLA for their work and feels they have done a great job in providing a plan. She thinks that the parking facilities will make the downtown a better place. They love the 13<sup>th</sup> and P public square concept. She would like to see the full plan before it goes to the public. She gets a lot of questions from the public, and it is important to educate the public.

Harris stated that he is very pleased with the vision they have created for downtown, especially the retail strategy. He believes the square could be a catalyst to change the dynamics of

downtown. He feels it is important to have early successes to make this happen.

McRoy stated that what struck her is the parking that goes along with the new buildings. She feels that will help attract investors. There are a lot of high dollar items on the table right now. She believes it would be better to release the plan in small increments, so as not to scare people. People become overwhelmed with the large price tags, and they become frustrated that we are dreaming too big and not taking care of the routine maintenance.

Steward remarked that he respectfully disagrees with McRoy. He believes it is important to have a visionary impact. Lincoln has the opportunity to grow faster and be larger than Omaha. If that is going to become true, we have to change our attitude about growth and development. He believes you cannot get that without a plan. If we need to educate the community better, then we need to have more voices. Early on, he challenged the consultants to be more bold. He feels they have done that. They have given us the opportunity to transform the visual spirit of the community. The streets will be more welcoming, the buildings will be more consistent in quality and character, and more people will be willing to spend money. If he has any request, it would be to do what we can to accelerate housing. He firmly believes that the people who live in the neighborhood are going to cause it to be what it becomes. He believes we need to re-evaluate some of the commitment to Antelope Valley. He added that he feels we owe the consultants a debt of appreciation.

Crandall then addressed the continued role of this committee. He feels it is important for this committee to meet in 120 days to assess the outcomes. Steward asked the committee about their feelings on continuing their role. There was agreement from the committee to do so. Stricker commented that she feels timing is important in implementing the projects.

Karl Fredrickson stated that he agrees that some of the emphasis of Antelope Valley needs to be shifted. We also need to consider the infrastructure needed to maintain these concepts. Crandall stated that it is easy to do when you have a healthy downtown and private investment, because you are generating tax revenues.

Dallas McGee stated that we have a vision to move forward in downtown, something that we have not had in 30 years. He feels that to be successful, we will all need to be involved in that vision.

Waite stated that the Master Plan will provide a framework to help in public policy issues. The University Master Plan has proven to be very helpful to the University administration with various issues on campus.

Steward thanked the consultants again and then adjourned the meeting at 10:14 a.m.

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